

French government threatens another war against Libya

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French Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian on Tuesday called for French-led intervention in Libya, claiming that Libya was becoming a “hub for terrorist groups”.

Just a few weeks ago, French President François Hollande had already urged the UN to provide political cover for renewed military action after NATO's 2011 war in Libya: “France asks the United Nations... to organize exceptional support for Libyan authorities to restore their state,” without which, he said, “terrorism will spread across the region.”

Ramping up this call, Le Drian said: “Today, I am sounding the alarm about the seriousness of the situation in Libya. The south is a sort of hub for terrorist groups where they come to resupply—including with weapons - and reorganize.”

“In the north, the political and economic centres of the country are now at risk from falling under jihadist control... We need to act in Libya and mobilize the international community,” Le Drian warned.

He said that French troops currently deployed in the Mali war might move northeast into Libya, through Algeria. “This will happen in harmony with the Algerians, who are major players in the region,” he added.

Le Drian's justification for a new imperialist intervention in Libya reeks of hypocrisy. Three years ago, France, the United States, and other leading NATO powers bombed Libya and armed a coalition of Al Qaeda-linked Islamist militias and tribal forces to destroy the Libyan state and murder its ruler, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi. Now, they are cynically seizing upon the chaos they unleashed in Libya as a reason to invade the country again, supposedly to fight the very same Islamist forces they armed in 2011.

As usual, the pyromaniacs in Paris are proceeding

with complete contempt for public opinion. A *Le Figaro* poll on Thursday found 82 percent opposition to a French intervention in Libya.

It has become transparently obvious that the 2011 NATO war produced a disaster for the people of Libya and all of Africa.

“Predominantly Islamist militias seized Tripoli in late August, the ‘legitimate’ government—exiled 1,200 kilometers away in Tobruk—no longer governs anything, Western embassies have all left, the South of the country has become a haven for terrorists, and the coast a center of migrant trafficking. All of this takes place against a backdrop of kidnappings, assassinations, and torture that complete the picture of a state that is failed to the bone,” *Le Figaro* wrote.

Tripoli, the Libyan capital, has been the scene of much of the fighting, with competing militias from Zintan and Misrata seeking to control the city. There has also been an ongoing offensive led by a long-time CIA asset, General Khalifa Hifter, who is financed by the Saudis, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and aims to set himself up as Libya's new dictator. The UAE air force recently flew a bombing mission with the Egyptian military to support Hifter's ground forces.

The elections last June failed to stop the fighting with only about 40 percent of the population voting. The government that emerged from the election has announced its resignation and another Islamist government has declared it is taking power.

This is above all an indictment of the pseudo-left forces, such as France's New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA), that sought to promote NATO's foot soldiers in Libya as leading a revolution (see: “A tool of imperialism: France’s New Anti-Capitalist Party backs war on Libya”). Treating the imperialist interests behind the Libyan war as irrelevant, they aligned

themselves with the official propaganda hailing the Libyan intervention as a “humanitarian” war. They are politically responsible for the disasters and the tens of thousands of casualties the war produced.

More broadly, they are responsible for the enormous escalation of French imperialist intervention in Africa that followed the Libyan war. Paris seized upon the threat posed by the terrorist groups it had armed in Libya to justify interventions planned with NATO and the Algerian regime, which are opposed by masses of people in France and throughout France's former colonial empire in Africa, including Algeria.

In Mali, one of the main causes of the government nearly being overthrown in 2012 was the return of heavily armed Tuareg mercenaries, who had been in the pay of Gaddafi, to northern Mali after the destruction of the Libyan regime. They joined with various Islamist groups to launch an offensive against the French-backed Malian government in Bamako, in the south. The French army then intervened in Mali to fight Tuareg forces that they had driven out of Libya in 2011.

These wars are part of a broader drive by French and NATO imperialism to re-establish their former colonial spheres of influence, in which they retain critical commercial and strategic interests. Algeria has close economic ties with France and is a big supplier of natural gas and petrol to Europe. The French state also has big investments in Niger, Mali's neighbor to the east, in the form of uranium mines for France's power plants and nuclear weapons.

As always, domestic considerations play a crucial role in the warmongering of French imperialism. In January 2013, as Paris launched the war in Mali, officials of Hollande's Socialist Party (PS) told the press that they were modeling their war on the 1982 Falkland Islands war of the right-wing British regime of Margaret Thatcher—hoping to boost support for austerity in the middle class by rallying the country around the flag through a quick war.

In recent weeks, Hollande has confronted the most serious crisis of his presidency. After suffering major defeats in municipal and European elections in the spring, due to his deeply unpopular austerity policies, the PS government collapsed amid rising divisions inside the ruling PS over French policy towards Germany. Hollande's popularity ratings have sunk to a

record-breaking low of 13 percent.

Amid this unprecedented crisis, Hollande and the PS are turning once again to war in an effort to divert attention from the war against the French population that they are waging at home.



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